

## **U.S. Census Bureau**

### **2005 American Community Survey Data for the Gulf Coast Area**

#### **Background**

The effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the population, economy, and infrastructure of affected areas in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas are without precedent. Beyond addressing short and long-term rescue and recovery operations, challenges exist in developing statistics that accurately reflect the changes the local population and economies are experiencing so that emerging recovery needs of affected areas can be identified. As is the case with other federal agencies, the U.S. Census Bureau is focused on providing affected areas with assistance in a timely manner as appropriate and consistent with our agency mission.

#### **The American Community Survey**

The American Community Survey (ACS) is part of the Decennial Census Program and was fully implemented on a national basis starting in January 2005. The ACS is a nationwide survey that provides annually updated and accurate demographic, socioeconomic, and housing information for communities across the country. In 2005, ACS data collection took place in all counties in the United States, including all of the areas in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas that were most affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

#### **2005 American Community Survey Special Product for the Gulf Coast Area**

In June 2006, the Census Bureau is releasing a special product to describe changes the local population and economies have experienced in the Gulf Coast areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Titled the *2005 American Community Survey (ACS) Special Product for the Gulf Coast Area*, the product is designed to reflect characteristics of housing and population for the areas most affected by the hurricanes. The ACS was not designed to produce estimates based on less than a full year of data, but due to the unprecedented effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, estimates are being released for the affected areas for the first eight months (January through August) of 2005 and the last four months (September through December) of 2005. The sample sizes of this product are smaller and the estimates less reliable than period estimates based on a full year of data. In addition, higher levels of nonresponse are reflected in the four-month period estimates due to the unique circumstances and challenges in conducting survey operations in areas most affected by the hurricanes. Data are being published for various combinations of the 117 counties designated by FEMA as receiving "Individual and Public Assistance" as of October 7, 2005 for Hurricane Katrina and October 20, 2005 for Hurricane Rita.

Standard ACS data estimates and products based on the full year of 2005 data will be released beginning in August of 2006. These products will include data for all areas in the United States with a population of 65,000 or more, including areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The standard ACS products reflect annual period estimates based on the cumulative data that are collected on a monthly basis. The effects of the hurricanes will have limited influence on the annual estimates due to the aggregation of all 12 months of data for 2005. The *2005 ACS Special Product for the Gulf Coast Area* is designed to address this limitation by providing data for two different time periods of 2005 that generally correspond to "pre-hurricane" conditions

and “post-hurricane” conditions. In releasing these data, the Census Bureau hopes to provide decision-makers with statistical data transcending anecdotal evidence as they develop recovery strategies to address the needs of the affected areas.

**For more information, visit the Web site for the 2005 American Community Survey Special Product for the Gulf Coast Area at**

**[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/gulf\\_coast/index.htm](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/gulf_coast/index.htm)**

**or call 1-888-346-9682.**